

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1539

As Reported by House Committee On:
Technology, Energy & Communications

Title: An act relating to failure to notify the one-number locator service when excavating near a transmission pipeline.

Brief Description: Making it a crime to excavate without notification near a transmission pipeline.

Sponsors: Representatives Linville, Roach, Morris, DeBolt, Ericksen, Williams and Upthegrove.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Technology, Energy & Communications: 2/8/05, 2/17/05 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Provides that it is a gross misdemeanor to excavate within 50 feet of a transmission pipeline without notifying the one-number locator service as required under law.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ENERGY & COMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Morris, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Crouse, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ericks, Hudgins, Nixon, P. Sullivan, Sump, Takko and Wallace.

Staff: Sarah Dylag (786-7109).

Background:

Under current law, a single statewide telephone number exists for referring excavators to the appropriate one-number locator service. A one-number locator service is operated by non-governmental entities and is a means by which a person can notify utilities of excavation and request field marking of underground facilities. In general, a one-number locator service receives requests for the location of buried utility facilities and relays those requests to member utilities and governmental agencies. The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, in consultation with the Washington Utilities Coordinating Council, establishes minimum standards and best management practices for one-number services.

Before conducting any excavation, excluding agricultural tilling less than 12 inches in depth, a person must notify pipeline companies of the scheduled excavation through the one-number locator service. Notification must occur in a window of not less than two business days but not more than 10 business days before beginning the excavation. If a pipeline company is notified that excavation work will occur near a pipeline, a representative of the company must consult with the excavator on-site prior to excavation.

A civil penalty of not more than \$10,000 applies when a person fails to notify the one-number locator service and causes damage to a hazardous liquid or gas pipeline.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Any person who fails to notify the one-number locator service, as required under law, before excavating within 50 feet of a transmission pipeline is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. A fine of not more than \$10,000 applies to each offense. When the excavation is conducted by a contractor, the contractor is required to notify the one-number locator service.

A civil penalty of not more than \$10,000 also applies when a person fails to notify the one-number locator service and causes damage to a hazardous liquid or gas pipeline.

A transmission pipeline is defined as a pipeline that transports hazardous liquid or gas within a storage field, or transports hazardous liquid or gas from an interstate pipeline or storage facility to a distribution main or a large volume hazardous liquid or gas user, or operates at a hoop stress of 20 percent or more of the specified minimum yield strength.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Provides that it is a gross misdemeanor to fail to notify the one-number locator service as required under law and to excavate within 50 feet, instead of 100 feet, of a transmission pipeline. Clarifies that civil penalties for failing to notify the one-number locator service and damaging a hazardous liquid or gas pipeline are applied in addition to any fines associated with a gross misdemeanor.

Amends current law to clarify that, in the situation where a contractor is conducting the excavation, the contractor has the responsibility to notify the one-number locator service.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support) Pipelines can be damaged internally and externally. Time and money is spent inspecting and analyzing pipeline systems for safety. Those efforts are focused

on internal forces. This bill protects against external issues that can affect pipelines. A person does not need to hit a pipeline to cause forces that will cause a pipeline to fail. Under current law, there is a system to notify all utilities of an excavation. Everyone is required to make the call. But there are not penalties assessed until damages occur. This bill targets those individuals who fail to notify before excavating. There are not new burdens on the public.

Near-miss incidents do occur, when excavators dig within 100 feet of a pipeline without calling the one-call number. Pipeline companies must conduct additional safety inspections when these incidents occur. Under current law, there are no consequences unless damages occur. Additional strength is needed in the law to stop the near-miss incidents.

Public education efforts are not sufficient to get people to call the one-number locator service. This bill will help get people to call the one-number locator service. The current system is inadequate and the bill is an improvement. The bill is about public safety and encourages everyone to pay attention and know that there could be pipelines underground.

(With concerns) There is a concern about imposing the penalty for excavation beyond the pipeline right-of-way. Although current penalties are inadequate to convince certain contractors to obey the law, the 100 foot distance could make it a crime for a homeowner to dig on their own property. One hundred feet is a long way. The distance should be limited to the right-of-way, although right-of-ways tend to vary so a different distance may be more appropriate.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Brad Tower and Dave Barnes, Olympic Pipeline Company; Katie Hansen and Richard Rupremiz, Washington Citizens Committee on Pipeline Safety; Mark Greenberg, One-Call Concepts, Inc.; and Dan Coyne, Williams.

(With concerns) Pete Kmet, Tumwater City Council and Washington Citizens Committee on Pipeline Safety; and Dave Ducharme, Utility Contractors Association of Washington; and Rick Slunaker, Associated General Contractors.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.